

Vong, IBM

CBS' Concern for IBM Costs \$250,000

By Richard K. Doan
TV and Radio Editor

CBS News said yesterday it had voluntarily passed up \$250,000 in sponsor money rather than take a chance that a "CBS Reports" documentary tonight on America's consumer indebtedness might be embarrassing to International Business Machines and its business customers.

IBM, as sponsor of the CBS Tuesday night news specials, was scheduled to underwrite an hour-long report tonight on what the network has described as "an examination-in-depth" of the question of whether Americans are over-extending themselves financially. Title of the program: "I. O. U. \$315,000,000,000."

Richard S. Salant, acting president of CBS News, said he had written Dean McKay, IBM vice-president of communications, last Friday advising him that the program dealt "directly with, and may directly affect, the sponsor's business interests" because it involved "major" IBM customers.

"You have not, of course, and under our policy, you cannot see the broadcast before it appears, and you have not so requested," Salant wrote. "In the circumstances, you may want to consider whether you wish to take advantage of your right to withdraw your sponsorship from 'I.O.U.'"

Both CBS News and IBM officials declined to identify the firms depicted in the report or even their classification—although both will be apparent by tonight—but an IBM spokesman did concede that the company had received "calls and telegrams" from "several of our customers" reporting they were involved in the program.

One source described the IBM customers as "finance and personal-loan companies and banks."

The IBM official said the company had advised CBS of these calls and wires, but had not asked or demanded out of the sponsorship commitment.

CBS said IBM would have spent about \$250,000 for commercials in the telecast.